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THE PERFECTED

By BENNETT WEAVER

My ruling shall be the service of wild atoms:
They shall compel me to stand like a reef, a horned reef
In a silty sea; and they shall wash about me,
Massing my crevices with terrible dred patterns,
Smothering in from tempests and tides, wasting,
Reforming, fixing until each shingle, each jag,
Each ledge is smooth to the sea. Then out, out
They shall build me into the sea, farther, farther
To the place where the deeps go down, where the heavens
are matted

With azure, and the new stars cry.— Then back in my
self,
In the hornéd substance primal, I shall feel, tho far,
The break of seeds in the silt and the light of wings
Over me and a great calling over me, a calling
Neither of deep nor height but of the perfected.

FIVE POEMS

By MACKNIGHT BLACK

GANDHI

The hand of a sower flings life to the furrows again.
Now the sun and the rain whisper a sure command.
Harvest comes . . . like a moving army, swordless
with wonder.

BLOWING CLEAN

The wind spoke to the trees today
Like a man telling hard truth to a multitude.
The cedars swayed and twisted uneasily, grotesquely
Before the stinging message,
And all their limbs were washed with fierce cleanness
Under a sky that promised neither storm nor sun.

LET ME WALK WHERE THE PITIFUL FEET ARE PASSING

Let me walk where the pitiful feet are passing.
Let my tread be heavy with going much alone.
And let my steps be many in a little space.
Let me be broken of looking toward the sky.
Walking on and on, may I feel blackly
How the poor forever go.

RIDDEN

Skyscrapers stand tethered at evening
Like lean desert horses,
Sinewy, dun.
Against the sunset
They show bloody flanks
As though fierce riders
Had spurred them all day long.

PASSERBY

We forget how this man's feet
On the gray pavements
Tread these slabs from quiet hillsides
That once leapt molten
In the youth of the mountains.
We forget how his body is warm
In the woven fleece from many flocks
That have stood head to head
Against the blown snow.
And we forget how these others
Passing him so closely in a narrow street
Are walkers lonely as he
For the touch of hand on hand
And body against body,
And for eyes' meeting.
We forget so many things about him,
We no longer feel within ourselves
How he is cheated
Of that other strength which comes
With the treading old, scarred rocks;
Of that other warmth the wool gives
When after months in pastures close to clouds
Its strands are spun
For herdsmen's staunch, slow-moving limbs;
And of that other oneness between a man and a man,
And between a man and a woman,
That is a might in the sinews when the sun is high,
And a singing sleep in the veins
When there is night.

RETIRED

By JAY G. SIGMUND

He has sprung from the loins of one who found
A path across a chartless span of plain:
And he was nurtured at a mother's breast
Who, wanting little, toiled with rough, red hands
And took a wage of crusts and childbirth pain.

His eyes first opened on an unploughed world
Where life was only for the sinewed few;
Pied tiger lilies in that grassy maze
Gave him a welcome from their ragged stems —
Standing on guard beneath a tent of blue.

His bare feet came to know the furrow soon
And soon his palms were curved to grasp a hoe:
His ear was tuned to catch the cock's first call —
His back was corded well that it might bend
To move along above a weedy row.

Choosing a mate, he sought no comely form
But looked for one to sweep his kitchen floor:
He wanted one with hands to knead coarse bread —
One with firm knees to grip a milk-pail's flanks
And strength to carry water to his door.

Now his broad acres spread and ripple off,
Marked by the lines of marching corn and cane:
Great barns are hunched above his mounds of hay —
Fat cattle stand and low at feeding time —
His hills are greening from their gifts of rain.

But he is gone and some drab village street
Each day is conscious of his restless tread:
Mutely he plods throughout his taskless day

Or sits beside his somber, toothless mate,
Letting time glide above his weathered head.

There is a strange hand on his stable's latch —
There is an alien voice to call his sheep —
More pliant fingers shape his shocks of oats,
His horses neigh and wait for him in vain,
The loam is ready for his time of sleep.

FOUR POEMS

By NORA B. CUNNINGHAM

WINDOWS

Your outlook I can never understand,
Your problems I but faintly comprehend;
How should it help you that I hold your hand?
How dare I call you friend?

With differing eyes you look upon the world,
Seeing the things that I shall never see;
Your banners are outflung and mine are furled,
My feet are bound — yours free.

And yet, O friend, the freshening winds of life
Sweep through my room from windows of your love,
And my deep tenderness falls on your strife
Like music from a casement high above. . . .

THE WATER TOWER

It's ugly — yes, I know — I hated it —
That huge red tank upon six spidery legs —
When it was being built. It has a hold
Far down into the rock. They blasted out
Great pits, and anchored those slim-looking legs
Deep . . . deep . . . They spoiled some trees that
stood too near,
But things that rise so high must have deep holds. . . .
Well, now it's up, and all the noise is past;
It throws a big round shadow in the sun . . .
I know it's ugly, yet somehow I like
To see it reaching up to touch the clouds,
Or tall and huge and dark beneath the moon.
— It makes me think of things . . . no matter what.

MOODS

My mood is a sack
Wherein I gather
White feathers plucked
From soft slain birds. . . .
I will make me a pillow.
I am so tired.

My mood is a cup
Held under the eaves
To catch the dripping
Of long-wished rain. . . .
I have thirsted deep —
I will drink and drink.

My mood is a nest,
I will fashion it
Of far-carried straws

Weaving it tight
With threads and hair
For young winged thoughts.

YOUR VOICE

Some day . . . I shall hear your voice
Moving among dark, richly-colored words
Like wind that slowly stirs the dark broad leaves
Of corn. . . .

I shall forget
The clamor and the crying of the world
In some still place, with peace before my eyes,
And in my ears the music of your voice. . . .

Oh, for a space there will be loveliness
And quietness and music in the midst
Of mirthless laughter, cruelty and death!
. . . Star-sprinkled skies at dawn . . . the tender
light
That lingers on still waters after dusk . . .
Wide desert stretches golden in the sun . . .
Your voice! . . .

Then suddenly
The music dies, the golden light goes out,
And peace is fled. . . .
Our swiftly-meeting eyes
Cry out against our futile, courteous lips,
Seeking for something lost . . . or never found . . .
Unmeaning clamor closes round again.

TWO POEMS

By MARIE EMILIE GILCHRIST

A NIGHT'S JOURNEY

Asleep in hills, I wake to find
The warm brown valleys left behind
And plains most measureless and dim
Fulfilled with snow to the farthest rim
Slip past, all swathed in folds of white
That shimmer in the dawning light.
An unsuspected freedom fills
My soul just come from shielding hills —
A peace, new-fallen as snow that night,
As I perceive with hushed delight
Upon a sky grown swiftly vast
New constellations wheeling past,
Till thoughts that range from pole to pole
Set wider skylines for the soul.

With smoke and roar we thunder by
Beneath remote and infinite sky
While close against the window pane
Rests the silence of the plain.

SUMMER

Cool winds lay bare the silver side of willows
That muffle the soft-flowing meadow stream
And spread and part the grain in golden eddies
Till the wind-winnowed uplands seem brocade —
Fields of the Cloth of Gold. Here in the clover
I lie at ease and watch the meadowlarks
Winging with sharp sweet cries across the blue.
The baffled sunlight falters at my hedgerow
Where purple shadows overlap the green
With fruited bloom, and in the tangled grass

Close to my outspread arm, a hidden world
Of scurrying ant and burnished onyx beetle
And fiddler crickets in their rusty black
Spins rustling through its summer orbit. Ferns
And clovers make me drowsy with their fragrance
And yellow butterflies go veering past
Eager to drink all sweetness in a moment
While I taste summer lingeringly. . . .

Soon

The sun will lay enchantment on this land
Spreading her rosy nets, binding the winds
With level lines of light, till they are hushed,
Still-standing in the apple-colored spell
Which only twilight breaks, proclaiming night —
Gray herald with his silver crescent horn.
He scatters dew upon the countryside
Until my hedgerow here is gemmed and shimmering,
And lit with flickering flames of emerald —
Glow-worm inhabited. The bearded grain
Is hoary silver in the gathering dusk
And all sounds fall away, leaving the voice
Of wakeful crickets, tireless and shrill
To stress the dreaming night's tranquility.

So have I mused away an afternoon
In rich contentment, with but one regret —
That I am mortal, bound by three score years —
Where centuries were but one happy day
To him who with a lover's brooding heart
Would con the beauty of a single season.

FOUR POEMS

By MARK VAN DOREN

JAVELINS

I heard a hum grow loud in the winter woods,
So went to see. In the very furthest part
A clearing, lately cut, circled a saw-mill,
A little shack that buzzed until it shook,
And breathed rankly of elm. I walked around;
The other side was open, whence I watched
The fat back of the sawman as he fed.
Both of his feet were hidden in the dust;
His legs were bundled tight, and his short arms
Heaved in a woolen coat that once was loose.
He stood, serving the poles, and never shifted.
I stepped to him; he turned a solemn face,
Red as the heap of elm, and only nodded.
I had to shout to make him hear at all:
"What are they going to do with these? Do you know?"
I thought his lips said "Javelins". That was wrong —
Javelins! So I screamed at him again.
This time he stopped the saw till he could tell me —
Gently, although he growled a little — "Javelins".
He started again. I waved a hand and went. . . .
All of the way the woods were close and cold;
But as I walked they seemed to open themselves,
Spreading before me green and smooth. It was Spring.
The sky was soft, and white young men in the distance,
Posturing, flung their spears, and trotted after
To measure and fling again. I heard no sound,
But the air was swift with the darting. . . . Then the
road.
I passed a team. The field once more was forest.
A few rods on and the hum had quieted too.

IN TIME OF DROUTH

The sun this morning is of no avail,
Shining upon a land that cannot cast
One sparkle back. The walls are dead with dust;
The maples do not lift a single leaf;
And all of the way to the village, down our slope,
The meadows have forgotten being green.
Yet look to the left a little. There is brightness.
There, in the angle of two ancient fences,
Dark tall cedars spread their pleasant boughs
Over a few white gravestones that the sun
Now catches full. You see them flash and smile.
Only the dead this morning are not old.

NOBLESSE

The stubble is an upstart thing,
A summer's growth, that as we walk
Turns — the envious underling —
And stabs us with its stalk.

Weeds, arriving everywhere,
Are insolent as soon as come.
They shout upon the morning air
Until the flowers are dumb.

But in this corner, past the gate,
Safe from where the horses turned,
I used to lie till it was late;
And here it was I learned

How blue-grass is the gentlest-born
Of all the gentle things that stand —
Holding, without a spear or thorn,
Hereditary land.

GRASS

Poppies are burning; daisies dip their faces;
The gentle ageratum at my side
Offers a pale blue cheek to the afternoon.
Something has brought the swallows whence they hid;
They tumble up and dizzy the warm day,
Speeding against the calm or dropping straight—
Dropping to cut and float. Along the walk
A black hose runs, and ends in a tall spray;
Cat-birds hop to the bath, and flirt and shine.
I look, but do not see these things; or care
When a brown, erring rabbit bounces in,
Fears the immaculate garden, and is gone.
Further across the way there quietly feed
A few round sheep in a shade. And out of sight
Momently there is a pattering among branches,
And ripened apples thud upon the ground.

I look and look, but do not see these things.
My mind is lost in the river of bright green
That, smoothly out from between those highest elms,
Issues under the sun. It does not pause,
But dreaming spreads and flows. . . . So I am taken
Beyond all flutter of birds, all cry of flowers—
All nibble, and leap, and fall — to lie in grass.

TWO POEMS

By MILDRED WESTON

HARVEST

I fling myself to the wind
In a passion of giving;
For the earth is hung

With purple shadows—
Dark clusters
In the vineyard of evening.

I hear fruits dropping
Bursting their tight wine skins
In the orchards!

The mellow stars are falling
Of their own weight;
The moon is a luminous ball
Of pollen.

Oh, heavy night,
What do I bring to the harvest?

QUICKENING

April has been tender with the ways
Trailing her delicate mist over the trees.
The willows are wonderfully blurred
And the poplar leaves swim.
Spring spills from a bird throat
Spills liquidly
And from each veiled tree
Come twitterings
And silver sounds
Dripping in showers.
The ground quivers with the impulse
Of violets
And the thrust of daffodils.
We should not walk the earth today
For she is tremulous
With the coming of flowers.

THE THIRD-STORY FRONT ROOM

By MIRIAM CASSEL

I

Before the Dusk Is Purple

A third story window,
And a wide street below—
Where many heads turn left and right
Passing to and fro.

Many heads look front, back,
Gaze down, or even stop;
But at a certain time each day
One glad face looks up.

With that smile and quaint wave
What happiness I know!
Together in the window, now;
Just the street below.

II

The Two of Us

Across the gold-red of the sky
There stretch three clouds of dusky-gray,
Like long, gaunt sea-gulls following
The slow and even flight of day.

Because I fear the loneliness
Of seas, of homeless birds, of skies;
I leave the casement seeking your
Caressing arms and calm brown eyes.

MIRAGE

By MARY ARBUCKLE

Howland looked up, as always, at the sound of her quick steps in the hall. But as they passed his door and went into the Dean's office, he subsided into "Brunner" and a thickened haze of pipe smoke. An end-of-the-term peace lay on Kent Hall; there were no hourly gongs, no thronging footsteps. Blandly quiescent in its early summer beauty, the University was haunted now only by certain tireless devotees of research and a scattering of professors and their secretaries. The pellucid sunlight, pouring into Ellery Howland's study window, exposed the academic impersonality of the book-walled room with its orderly desk and plain, dark rug, and brought out strikingly its one dissonant note of beauty, an exquisite Tanagra statuette on a small stand near the window.

Ellery Howland, himself, with his slight portliness, his un-nervous, heavy face, his baldness and shell-rimmed spectacles, belonged as consistently to the room as did the enormous parchment-bound *Corpus Juris Civilis* on the arm of the Morris chair where he lay back puffing his stocky pipe. A recognized authority on the history of the law, at the age of fifty — there you have Howland. For a prestige grown out of twenty years of delving at the roots of things does not come to the high-strung, the restless of imagination. As prosaic as their titles appeared the author of the shelf of dark-green volumes: the eternal student reading and smoking with his back to the sun. Only in his dark eyes as he looked up had there been a hiding sensitiveness, a soft spark of the romantic, as incongruous with a phlegmatic nature as was the Tanagra statuette in the law-book-walled room.

Again those quick, light steps, and Madeleine Conover stood in his door. She smiled at him as he closed his

book and rose — her slow, detached smile. "The Dean would like to discuss that next year's seminar with you if you have time."

As she came toward the desk in the sunshine, her slight figure had the unconscious grace of a child's. With her striking coloring of black hair and blue eyes, her regular features, she missed beauty only because of a lack of illumination in her face. The real woman was half invisible; a vague preoccupation hinting at sadness lay over her like a veil. It was in her soft, uncolored voice, her aloof yet friendly eyes.

Under Howland's half-shy regard, she took on a deliberate brightness. "Are you going to the concert on the campus tonight?" she asked.

"Are you?"

"Yes."

"Then I am." He smiled, flushing a little.

"I shall listen to it from the marble seat by the library."

"So shall I," and he added, ponderously polite, "with your kind permission."

"I wanted a talk with you, for I leave on Saturday."

"On Saturday!" He picked up his pipe from the arm of the chair, where he had laid it on her entrance, and held it in not-quite-steady fingers. "But I thought your regular time of departure was not until July?"

"It isn't. But I'm not going to my regular Connecticut farmhouse on this vacation, Ellery. I don't know why I haven't told you before — I'm going to Arizona — at last."

"To Arizona!"

"Yes." Her look fled from his, out the sunny window, and to his sensitive perception there was a sudden wraith-like prefiguring of the woman middle-age would overtake — a tired woman with sad eyes. While he groped for words, she stood withdrawn and intent.

Then, turning suddenly with a little motion of the hand toward him, she left the room.

Howland sank into his chair and, with "Brunner" thrust to one side and the Dean's message forgotten, sat gazing into the blue curls of his pipe smoke until the sunlight faded.

Madeleine Conover had been secretary to the Dean for seven years. Howland had seen her only once before she came to the University — two years before, when she was about to start west to marry Ethan Conover in Arizona. It was at afternoon tea at Mrs. Maunsel's and Madeleine Davis was a girl with poppies on her hat, a young and pretty girl whom Howland had impersonally admired. He remembered that she had seemed quieter than was his idea of young girls and that her eyes, shadowy under the poppies, held a glowing intensity of happiness that made him feel very old and far away as he passed her the tea-cakes.

Young Ethan Conover was a graduate of the University who had assisted in the Economics department before accepting a professorship in the west. He was brilliant and well-liked, and his engagement to Madeleine Davis drew her from her genteel obscurity into the mild sociability of faculty circles. Their marriage was reported to be ideally happy, and Ethan Conover's sudden death at the end of two years cast a temporary pall over all who had known them.

Soon after his burial in the west, his widow returned to the home of her parents. Then, close on the heels of her great tragedy followed a lesser one. Her father's small bookshop burned uninsured — a loss irreparable at his age. It was necessary for Madeleine to support her parents as well as herself. Before her marriage she had taken a secretarial course, and within a month after her return she accepted the position offered her in the Dean's office.

People, of course, pitied her intensely. But vicarious suffering is short-lived, and her place as a cog in the machinery of the university soon came to be taken for granted. Her own attitude facilitated this, for she had retreated into a reserve as uniform as it was impenetrable. Her manner was not noticeably cold and she displayed the requisite amount of interest in her work, but the barrier was always there behind which she stood alone. After a few tentative efforts, no one tried to cross it.

Ellery Howland, a man without family and temperamentally isolated from vital contacts, found himself brooding on her mechanistic life, wondering to what inner fastness her hurt soul had retreated. The woman and her story wove themselves into a fascinating fabric which, half unconsciously, he scrutinized for an ideal pattern.

It was not until her third year in Kent Hall that the curtain of impersonality was rent between them. That summer a bypath of research had seduced him into the enchanted region of early Celtic literature and, the law and vacation time forgotten, he lingered on in Kent Hall, wrapped in pipe smoke and the ecstasy of magic cadences. Madeleine Conover was completing the typing of his latest legal tome. Their two offices were the only ones open on the floor, and through the long, warm days the clicking of her solitary typewriter registered on his absorption with vague discomfort. He knew the year had been a hard one for her because of her mother's illness.

One day as he passed her door, she asked him to decipher a difficult passage of copy; and as he stood by her desk, he was struck with her pallor. "Isn't it time you were off on your vacation?" he asked with embarrassed solicitude.

"I'm not taking one this year." Her voice had an un-

natural hardness and he noted the lines of strain about her mouth. "We've been to great expense. This morning the doctor told me my mother will always be an invalid."

"Oh, I'm sorry!" A dull color flooded Howland's face with the rush of his sympathy.

She laid aside the papers in her hands and sat looking down at her typewriter. It unnerved him to see that her mouth was quivering and he reproached himself with having taken her off her guard. For the life of him, he could think of nothing to say.

But she spoke, in a low voice as though talking to herself: "No trouble seems much now—a great sorrow makes you almost immune to smaller ones."

A sense of surprise and strangeness held Howland tense. She had spoken at last of her tragedy! As from the outer rim of a dream, he heard the whirring of the campus lawn mower, small quiet noises in the building, and felt the throbbing of his heart as at a presaging moment.

"You're very brave," he managed to say.

"Brave!" she echoed with a faint, bitter smile. "I've nothing to fear—any more."

Now he almost wished that she would weep, that her hard mysterious face would melt into understandable tears. But he never forgot the look in her eyes as she lifted them to his. "We were so happy," she said simply, and that worn sentence made her almost unbearably poignant.

"Would you—could you tell me about it?" Howland, standing awkwardly before her, divined a little sadly that to her he had no encumbering individuality: he was heaviness, silence, discretion. It was as though she should pour out her heart to these academic walls—he belonged as little to the world of emotion. Their encounter had chanced on a time when, under great

strain, she could no longer be proudly self-sufficient. He was aeons old; she, a child, for the moment, whom speech would comfort. As he drew up a chair, his eyes were deeply kind.

"It's five years ago today we were married. That's why — with this about my mother —" She looked away as though carefully banking an emotion that threatened to break the stillness of her face. "You know you can type and think at the same time." Her mouth smiled stiffly.

"That stuff — I should think so!"

"It's five years and five days since I started for Arizona. Sometimes I can hardly believe it was part of my life — that happiness. . . . We had a little house in Tucson and a camp in the mountains." Her soft voice was only an audible reverie. "We went to the camp right after our marriage. It was isolated, and all around — so beautiful! I love that bare, sharp beauty of the west — with its deserts and mirages. One of its sunsets means more to me than all the tame loveliness of these eastern hills. That summer — all its days seem alike in looking back — all perfect. . . . Then two weeks before the college opened, we went to town and arranged our house. We —" Her voice trailed into vague bewilderment. "After all, there's nothing to tell. 'Happiness has no history' — the old platitudes are the standard measures of life, aren't they? And we were supremely happy. . . ."

She was silent for a moment, and when she went on her voice was hard and a little flat. "That second summer, Ethan had become interested in mineralogy and joined a government party for a week to collect specimens. The trip was very severe, and when he came back he complained of shortness of breath and a pain at his heart. Then for the first time he told me that he had strained it in rowing at college. I made him go to bed

and rest; but the next day he felt all right and insisted on going for our usual walk to the big pine on the ledge. I turned back to get a book and he went on ahead. When I came to the pine, he was lying under it with his face pillowed on his arms. I didn't speak to him for a few minutes, thinking he was resting. When finally I did, he didn't answer. He was dead."

Howland looked away, trying desperately to find words beyond some perfunctory phrase. There was a constriction in his throat and a melting of his whole being to the small, pale woman in the dark dress.

"That's all," she said. "His life had ended—and mine. I've gone on since—automatically. And will go on, I suppose, to a ripe old age—I've a strong constitution. There's just one thing I want before I die!" A sudden change erased her immobility. Her face grew bitter and terribly alive.

"And that one thing," asked Howland, as she did not speak.

"Is *time*," she said fiercely, "*time* to grieve! Do you know what it means never to be able to afford the luxury of grief—to schedule your few precious tears—to force yourself to sleep at night that you may be strong enough for tomorrow's work, when you would give your very soul to lie and cry all night? I came here to work with my heart still numb from shock. The agony that follows numbness has tried to claim me ever since—and oh, how I've longed to yield myself up to it! There's been no *time*!"

She broke into a strange, harsh laugh, and, getting up, paced from her desk to the window, and back again. "Even on my vacations I've had my mother with me to care for. Never a day of precious isolation to bring him back—to dwell on it all and weep and weep and weep!"

"Some day I'll have it, though. I'm going back to the place where we lived together, to the spot where we both

died. I'll recall every day, every hour, every minute of our life and measure my loss by — this desert that followed. I'll grieve and grieve to my heart's content — the content of fully realized despair."

In the utter un-selfconsciousness of strong emotion, she stood facing Howland and he was breathless at her beauty. But as she sank to her chair, the gray veil descended upon her like the thin coating of ashes that forms on a live coal, and through it slowly faded the color and warmth into which she had been stirred. She picked up some papers on the desk and turned them over mechanically in her hands.

Howland rose. "I'm glad you've told me," he said in a low, unsteady voice, "glad you've told me what you have. I can't explain what it means to me. You — It's all a part of — It's all very beautiful."

Back in his study, the room was strange. The substance of things unseen had forever come between Howland and the tiers of lawbooks. No longer could he bury his head in the drifted sands of antiquity and imagine himself hidden from the phantom of idealism that pursued him. It had materialized in a living presence. This woman, beautiful in body and soul, had known a perfect love — that divine thing whose existence he had dared to doubt. And her postponed yielding to the grief that waited on the exigencies of her life added a subtle touch of loveliness that exalted him.

Closing the door and moving with a quietness that was almost stealth, he took from the recesses of his desk a volume of Keats. All of Ellery Howland, the articulate being, was contained in the shelf of dark-green, legal-historical volumes; and the rhythm of immortal lines had come to be the silent voice of his emotions — given him by his brothers, the poets, because he was dumb. Now as, for the thousandth time, he turned to the "Ode on a Grecian Urn", the old familiar ecstasy held him in

redoubled thrall. He gave a long, trembling sigh and his lips moved, repeating, "happy, happy love" — "forever warm, forever young" — . The coward heart of a dreamer who had found it easier to renounce life than to risk a cheapening of its values, a tawdry coarsening of its ethereal pattern, melted into worship of Madeleine Conover.

It was dusk, with an immature moon, and the music came softened by distance. They had hardly spoken in the half hour since they met. The music ceased, and they could hear the talk and laughter of unseen wanderers on the campus.

"Shall I see you again before you leave — outside of working hours?" Howland's tone was a masterpiece of casualness.

"I think not. I'll be very busy, you know."

"I'm sorry. Then I must make the most of this evening." His bespectacled eyes lingered on the small paleness of her face as she lay relaxed in the curve of the marble seat. "I continually wish you'd let me be of service to you — buy your tickets, see you to the train."

She reached out quickly and touched his hand. "You've been of service to me for four years, Ellery Howland, with your blessed understanding. Isn't that enough?"

"No, not enough." He looked away to the shadows of Philosophy Hall.

"You've been my rock in a weary land. There's no denying it — I needed you desperately."

He fought off his longing to tell her that he needed her, that he had always needed her, that she stood for life to him, and the affirmation of his dreams — and said: "I trust the metaphor of a rock is not inspired by my inexpressiveness."

"Never!" She laughed softly.

"And I refuse to grant you the rôle of benefits received — it properly belongs to me." On the last words, his labored lightness gave way to an irresistible gravity.

Again she laughed. "Our remarks have the tone of long adieus. Next fall is only a short way off, when we'll both be back in Kent Hall — back in the dear, self-important bustle of dignified futility."

"I shall look forward to it."

"And I shall spend the summer looking backward."

"Yes. . . ." He saw her on her pilgrimage to the west. He saw her in the glare of that half-desert as in some unreal, enchanted light. She was all that he held true, infinitely precious. The thought of her was somehow linked with the vague pain he had known as a child over not being able to incorporate the perfume and beauty of flowers into his being, at having it always apart and not to be possessed. She must know what she meant to him!

He took her hand that lay on the seat between them and pressed it between both of his. "Madeleine," he began, "I—" The words would not come. Without her, his life was like her characterization of their academic world — only a "dignified futility."

"I love you — I want you." Had he spoken aloud? The sweat of a great daring was cold on his forehead. He felt a pulse flutter in her wrist, her sudden tensioning. "You know now — you understand. . . ."

"Oh! dear Ellery — " She sat upright. "I didn't know. I never dreamed. . . ."

"Is there any hope — for me?"

"But I've nothing to give. I'm done for, my heart is."

"I'd not expect you to care — just to let me."

"I couldn't. Don't you see what it would be?"

"You mean — a profanation?" His grasp on her hand relaxed and the sadness of inevitability swept over him. But it brought a lucid calmness. "I want you to

understand:—that part of your life, your husband—your beautiful story—I reverence it beyond words. I've lived it as you've told me. You've thanked me for listening, for letting you dwell on every little homely detail of your happiness. You say it's kept you sane to talk of those dear times to me—but you can't know what it's done for me. It's confirmed something, made the ineffable real and visible. I can't explain. It's a part of you—a part of you I worship."

"I understand, my dear, and I would have understood before but for—for blind selfishness." Her voice trembled. "And I understand, too, a thing you never will—how wonderful you are. But the past isn't past for me. It's not a memory, but a reality. And life can hold only one at a time of realities, you know. I haven't even finished living mine—it's been waiting for me all these seven years."

"Yes. . . ." Why should he love her more because of the barrier that shut him from her life?

She rose and stood in the soft obscurity with head half turned away. "I must go home."

He did not get up at once to accompany her, but sat looking at her as though under a spell he could not bear to break—as though to postpone the vanishing of that slight, dim figure with averted face.

Howland was delayed by an archaeological adventure in Italy, where he had gone on Madeleine Conover's departure, and did not return to the University until the second week of the fall term. His first meeting with her was in the hall as she was going to the Dean's office. There was time only for a few words of greeting and to arrange an engagement for that evening. In all the years of their friendship, she had never invited him to call at her home—their association had been confined to the campus and occasional long walks—so her invitation had the added significance of the unprecedented.

In the intervals of his busy day, even in the pauses of his lectures, a query kept shaping itself: how had she changed? What was the subtle difference he had felt, rather than seen, at their brief meeting? She was more lovely, with a freshness of renewal; and for the first time he had consciously noted her exquisite taste in dress. But there was an indefinable something new in her voice, the glance of her eyes. As an undereurrent to his joy at seeing her again, joy pierced with sadness, ran a vague suspense.

Her home was just as he had visualized it, charming with a faded but dignified graciousness, like that of a shabby old gentlewoman. In the small drawing-room to which the neat, but obviously "all-round" maid conducted him, a wood fire dispelled the first chill of autumn. Across a chair lay a vivid and lavishly embroidered Chinese shawl. It was out of key with the place; he wondered if Madeleine had a guest. Through a curtained doorway to the right, he saw a frail old man reading by a shaded lamp, and recalled that Madeleine's father had had some reputation as a connoisseur of first editions in his day. The pathos of failure and poverty for the gentle and intelligent smote him with a melancholy pity.

He was turning over an unusual binding on the table when Madeleine entered the room. He was struck with incoherence at her appearance. She wore a gown of dull green velvet with a square, low-cut neck, and she might have been the original of some rare and beautiful portrait. She had entirely laid off mourning; that was why he had noticed her dress today.

"The big chair is yours," she said, clasping his hand, "draw it to the fire."

She seated herself on a formal old divan and smiled at him — her familiar, slow smile. With a glow in her cheeks and the gown giving its color to her eyes, her beauty was positive, obvious. There was no trace of that

old indefinable blurring, that veil of removal. In Howland's adoring eyes, the interrogation grew.

They talked a little of his experiences in Etruria. The discovery of the friezes and medals was of especial significance, he said, in throwing light on the passing of the Greek influence. He could never be grateful enough to Deming for having let him join the expedition. Altogether it had met with exceptional luck.

"Exceptional luck," she repeated slowly. "Then it isn't unusual for people *not* to be able to uncover the past, no matter how hard they try?"

"Why no! But, Madeleine — what do you mean?"

"That *my* expedition failed."

"But — I don't understand." He felt a tension at his heart, a stiffening of his hands on the chair arms.

She was looking at him with a remote, bright cynicism. "Then I'll make myself clear. I couldn't bring him back — I couldn't grieve."

He heard his hesitating voice, entirely detached from the throbbing bewilderment that held him. "Not grieve, perhaps, — there's an immediacy about grief as distinguished from sorrow."

"An immediacy! How true! The god of our emotional integrity is a jealous god — he'll not be put off to a convenient season."

"But you had — memories."

"Yes — memories!" Her voice rose to soft vehemence. "They rushed at me from every quarter, overwhelming me with their sweetness. I wept at the sheer beauty of those two years. But, oh, Ellery, I wanted to grieve *for* him! I'd been cheated of my grief and I wanted it! I wanted to live my tragedy fully — it was mine — I had a right to it! I went to every place we'd been together, recalled a thousand little nameless tendernesses. Then I brought back that terrible last hour with him under the pine tree. It was like reading a wonder-

ful, heart-wrenching story in which one suffers vicariously with the characters. But I wanted my *own* suffering!

"This melting, sentimental sadness wasn't that at all. It was more like — more horribly like complacence that this beautiful interval had been really mine. For always, out there at the scene of it all, I had to assure myself that it was indeed I who had lived it, in the form of that young girl, — I, the sober, philosophical woman. Yes, Ellery, I discovered that I was markedly philosophical — fairly fought off a comforting sense of inevitability."

Her eyes were, to Howland, challenging, defiant in their cold honesty. "I thought I was stunned, made emotionally impotent by denial — that it would come, the pain of loss. There was something very terrible in wanting *to want* to throw myself down under the pine tree and cry despairingly, endlessly. That pine tree and solitude had been my goal for years, and reaching it was — supreme irony!"

She rose and, going slowly to the fireplace, stood looking down into the blaze. Howland's hand shaded his eyes, but the pose of his slightly portly figure in the big chair suggested the silent, waiting judge.

"Time!" she said with smiling bitterness, "*time!* Only your buried medals and friezes can withstand it and reappear obediently to the eager hands and eyes that search for them."

Still he did not speak. Somewhere a door closed and the light went out in the next room. She faced him in a positive, assertive movement, and it seemed to him she radiated an electric vitality, an eagerness for truth, for life.

"You see I couldn't cross the desert of seven years. The past *looked* so near, — like a purple canyon I once wanted to explore in my tenderfoot days in the west. It apparently lay not far beyond a dry arroyo where we camped one night, and I would not be persuaded it was a

hundred miles away till, in an hour, it vanished entirely. What they call out there a 'low morning' had brought it up so near. That's what I did this summer. I started for my purple canyon that I thought was just over the ridge of yesterday. Perhaps a stronger and more steadfast nature would have found it. I could not. But I wouldn't admit to myself for a long time that it had faded from my sight—as such things always fade" Howland half raised his hand, like a judge to stem a tide of evidence. "Yes, as they always fade!" she repeated.

At the moment he was seeing her in the light of some ancient, iconoclastic prophetess, with eyes at once mystical and cold, as she dethroned the ruling deities. He did not see himself as a bewildered worshipper before an empty shrine; he was conscious only of a whirling confusion of the spirit, a numb questioning and heaviness.

She crossed to the chair and, taking up the Chinese shawl, wrapped it around her shoulders. Then, sitting down on a low stool, she stretched both hands out toward the fire; the leaping warmth transfigured her face. "So you see I found I was only a bread-and-butter person, after all—a practical, everyday person who's fallen in love with life again as a sensible woman should."

Wrapped in her vivid shawl, she was again the girl with poppies on her hat who had made him feel so old and alien to her as he passed her tea cakes years ago. He let his head droop forward, thankful for her averted eyes. Was the strange, sickening feeling that gripped him a longing to have that other Madeleine back, that dear, unattainable, dark-clothed woman in love not with life but with dreams? Was it life he himself wanted—or dreams? Had their common bond vanished?

But no, his gods could not so betray him! This was the woman at whose feet he had poured the distilled ecstasy of his soul for years. It was she he loved and

not her dead romance — surely she, the living, present Madeleine. But he must establish this thing before it eluded him, became faint and deniable. He had learned that there were moments in life when one must not pause for thought, when one must grasp blindly at that which remained, lest the cold emptiness of doubt and negation close over one.

Getting up slowly, he went over beside her and stood looking down at her. Through her bright, unreadable gaze he groped, till he glimpsed a tenderness that was deep, maternal.

"Dear Ellery," she said in a low, moved voice, stretching her hand up towards him, "you've been here all along, and it's taken me so long to see."

"Yes." He bent his lips to her hand, then sank awkwardly to his knees beside her. "I love you." The words were his one link with an obscure reality. Their utterance made it clearer.

As his arms enclosed her, she drew his head to her bosom. He felt her abundant warmth, felt the soft thud of her young heart hurrying in pursuit of life. How far away she was! His spirit fainted as before impassable distances. Yet only a fool, perhaps, would mourn the passing of that "low morning" of the soul that had brought her near — so near! Always in the course of nature came the noonday glare of reality, of common-sense, in which visions faded.

He raised his head and, taking off his blurred spectacles, laid them to one side before he kissed her lips.

TO JAMES BRANCH CABELL:
GRAND MONARCH DE POICTESME

By STANLEY E. BABB

*Is it not passing brave to be a king
And ride in triumph through Persepolis?*
—Kit Marlowe

I

Within that pleasaunce wrought of tinted dreams,
With gothic towers glittering in the sun,
He rules, a gallant playfellow of those queens
Whom he has rescued from oblivion;
And out of a brilliant scarlet tapestry
Of words he cuts the figures of the men
Who sang the ancient songs, and tenderly
And wistfully and curiously watches them.

They jape and prance, the men whom this man makes,
And live right merrily yet pensively,
Knowing that this queen's beauty which now shakes
Their hearts will soon be rotting utterly:
And out of his lovely words he builds a tomb
For all these men and sings them to their doom.

II

He knows that beauty crumbles into dust
And drifts into the fibres of the earth:
He knows the slim bright sword of love grows rust,
And that time's silence quenches all men's mirth;
He knows that Helen of Troy is but a name,
And Guenevere the fragment of a rhyme,
And yet he dreams these queens are like a flame
Burning through all the barriers of time.

He knows someday even these dreams will die
Forever, and their magic will be gone,
And so with words he weaves a lonely cry
For all old loveliness and pleasure blown
In fragments by the great winds of the world
Wherein, like stars, the dreams of men are whirled.

III

We hear his cry and long for that bright day
When Poictesme was, and Jurgen left his wife
And wandered, swaggering casually, away
In quest of richer lips and amorous strife:
We hear his cry: it wakes swift, wingéd dreams
Of kings and jesters, and the slanted spears
Of singing warriors marching, and high queens
Whose beauty drenched men's utterances with tears.

We hear his cry and echo it wistfully,
Rebelling against the great relentless days
That trampled so much beauty recklessly
And shattered so many queens into a haze
Of unimportant dust to nourish grass:
We hear his cry . . . and watch the days stride past!

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